

IN TOUCH with your TOWN

The Town
Newsletter

JANUARY 2004

Issue 22

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, 4 London St, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7DQ

Editorial & Commentary by the Town Clerk

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LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD...

Monday morning at the Town Hall is often **Complaints R' us**, as the events of the weekend unfold with all the drama that a pothole, a street light in darkness or leaves on the pavement can muster. These need reporting, but it really is 'buy one get one free' in terms of complaining at the start of each week. This can take stress in the workplace on to another level, particularly when the vast majority of the complaints have nothing to do with Swaffham Town Council.

It could be worse though, as I am writing this column the day after the capture of **Saddam Hussein** in Iraq this puts it into its true perspective. We should spare a thought for those less fortunate living and working in other parts of the world. Swaffham on the whole is a very pleasant Market Town, you have a Town Council looking after the interests of those that live and work here. A new years resolution for Swaffham, could be that as a town we should learn to be more tolerant of minority interests and far more positive. There have been times this past year when pernicious comments or actions have been to the detriment of everyone. It has made the job your Council does on your behalf, that much harder.

Looking back at the year what will Swaffham remember of 2003? It may well be the negativity and adverse publicity surrounding the Parish Poll but perhaps it should be the £4 million grant secured for Town Centre regeneration, a further £4 million for Hammonds School, the £1.5 million investment in a new Health Centre, a £60,000 grant for the Skateboard project, £25,000 grant for the Museum, the offer of a £150,000 donation or land for a swimming pool, a £90,000 grant for an extended Tourist Information Centre and then there is the temporary Bus Shelter. **No** I believe that even in Swaffham, 2003 will thankfully be remembered for our World Cup winning Rugby team and Jonny Wilkinson's last minute drop goal against the home side Australia.

Your Town Council can't claim credit for all of those things listed. As for that drop goal, of course the Town Council can claim credit for this, like every one else willing the ball to drop between the posts, it worked and looking at how this was achieved, could help Swaffham. Hard work, collective teamwork and individual skill, each one dependant on the other and something that I said in a newsletter quite some time ago, everyone pulling in one direction.

I really do hope that you had a good Christmas and on behalf of my staff I wish you a very happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year. We will all be working hard with your Town Council to try and make 2004 a year to remember for Swaffham, for all the right reasons. There is a lot of work to do, more than ever before..

Enjoy your read.... RB Town Clerk

COPY DEADLINE for next issue

N.B. Your copy **DEADLINE** for the next issue due out around Easter. All copy in by Monday 15th March 2004 at the latest. Thank you to all contributors of the newsletter, new contributions always welcome.

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FROM THE

MAYOR'S PARLOUR

By the time this newsletter reaches you the Christmas Festivities will be over and we will be starting another new year, I cannot believe that it is now well over half way through my year as your Mayor. My wife Julie and I would like to thank everyone for their help and kindness, as wherever we have been invited to attend community events, we have been made to feel so welcome. This we appreciate, as we both enjoy these events very much, (e.g. on Christmas Day it is customary for the Mayor to visit the Community Hospital and the Residential Homes).

The recent response to the 'HAVE YOUR SAY' consultation paper has been very encouraging. The details will be fully analysed and will be taken account of when deciding Council policy on a number of issues. There has already been an interim report that resulted in a meeting with Breckland Council to discuss how the town will develop in the future. The biggest surprise was of course the generous offer of £150,000 or a piece of land for a swimming pool from Mr. & Mrs. Dennis. This of course will be taken further at the earliest opportunity in consultation with Breckland Council and the Swimming Pool Association.

At the time of writing, the Town Council have just had their budget meeting to discuss the finances and Precept requirement for next year. I am really pleased that the increase in Precept has been kept to a manageable level and that it is no where near to the large increase that was predicted by some. There has been a change in overall Financial Policy and again this is a sensible way to go forward, hindsight is a wonderful thing.

I will finish with a message of goodwill to you all for the new year ahead. I really look forward to the permanent bus shelter ASAP. On behalf of my fellow councillors I would like to thank the Town Council staff for all their hard work and I wish everyone a happy new year.

Ian Sherwood, Mayor of Swaffham

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk and Market Committee to implement and manage.

2) TOWN HALL

The budget for the Town Hall should be split into two, the first being the normal revenue budget and the second being the capital expenditure budget for the on-going Town Hall extension project. The revenue budget takes account of the extension being completed and ready for use in October 2004. There will be increased income and expenditure for the Town Hall, it is difficult to project the level of either at the present time. Costs of hiring offices and/or the new Council Chamber will need to be carefully priced, to take account of overheads and the facilities for hire. Comparison work has begun and this will be completed nearer the time that these facilities become available. Whilst there will be an increase in Rates, Electricity, Heating, Water Rates and maintenance contracts, this needs to be offset against a more cost efficient building, reducing the annual cost of major repairs, a rate exemption for part of the Town Hall occupied by the Museum and facilities that will attract an income.

It is agreed that The Town Clerk prepares a draft pricing structure for the Town Council to consider, with delegated authority given to the Finance Committee to approve preferably at their June 2004 meeting, or by the September 2004 meeting at the latest.

In addition within the revenue budget there is a cost built into the telephone budget to prepare the ground for a Broadband connection. It is essential that the Council keep up to date with the latest technology. The Broadband system allows for an internet connection 24 hours a day, whilst still being able to be on the telephone.

It is agreed that the Town Council prepare and install a Broadband connection at the earliest opportunity.

The capital budget for the Town Hall extension has to take into account a number of essential finishing off expenses i.e. upgraded security both in terms of the alarm and CCTV systems, installing a telephone system to serve the new building, floor coverings, soft furnishings/blinds, notice/display boards, shelving, wall mounted bench seating, purpose built reception desk, fully equipped kitchen in the offices and Council Chamber, sound system and a limited amount of furnishings for the new Council Chamber.

It is agreed that an audit of existing furniture, computers, printers, office machinery and other equipment is completed by the end of March 2004. That subject to the approval of the Finance Committee, the Town Clerk negotiates the precise details of everything that will be provided by the capital budget at the earliest opportunity following the appointment of the main contractor.

3) MUSEUM

The Museum expenditure is in two sections within this budget, although a third section could be Stage Two of the Town Hall project, with £50,000 being allocated to the Museum enhancement to attract match funding for Swaffham Museum Ltd. This project should follow on from the work on the Town Hall extension, with completion by June 2005 if grant funding is forthcoming.

The first section of the Museum expenditure is the annual grant, increased this year by 3.3% to £3,100 as per the STC/Swaffham Museum Ltd agreement. The second section of the Museum expenditure is a percentage of the Town Hall day to day costs i.e. Electricity, Heating, Rates and Water

**SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL - BUDGET NOTES 2004/05
USE OF RESERVES**

The use of Reserves is always a mystery to anyone who is unfamiliar with accounts or budgets in any shape or form. What we are trying to do with the assistance of the Internal Auditor is put a tag on as many different income or expenditure items as we possible can, this we believe to be the clearest indication that everything is as transparent and accountable as it can be. In respect of Reserves, the aim is still to keep these at a reasonable level to cover any emergency that might occur in the course of a financial year.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER COUNCILS

Thirteen Town & Parish Councils have been consulted on a range of comparative facts and figures. No two Parish or Town Councils are the same, that there are very different circumstances, localised problems and detailed management of their patch that usually provides a very distinct footprint. The information confirms the diverse nature of our Town & Parish Councils, and at the end of the day it is all about personal choice, justifying your decisions to the electorate and giving value for money whilst delivering a service to Swaffham. The comparisons are a requirement under the Best Value principles which the Council have agreed to under their four year strategy.

1) MARKET

The Market Traders seem to have taken to the Discount Structure introduced for the first time at the beginning of April earlier this year. There has been many more traders' pay in advance or on time than ever before. The long standing debts have also been reduced by 50%, as weekly collections by the Market Superintendent monitored by the Deputy Town Clerk has brought this situation under control. It has been made clear to traders where they stand now if they fall behind in rent, the sudden loss of market rights in respect of their pitch seems to focus the mind.

It is agreed that from 1st April 2004 that a 3% increase across the board is applied, also that the same discount structure and debt collection policy is continued.

The Market Superintendent has been researching our neighbouring Farmers Markets and already 17 traders have expressed an interest in a mid-week once a month Farmers Market on a Wednesday. Thus bringing Swaffham into line with other Market Towns of Fakenham, Dereham and Watton in particular. This would be located at the War Memorial Site, it would not impinge on the remainder of the Market Place and it would be self-funding. I.e. the income would cover any salary costs for the Superintendent and administration, sending bills, collecting and banking monies, accounting etc. The projected figures feature under the Market cost centre for the first time.

It is agreed that a Farmers Market is established in the next financial year beginning in April 2004, with a pricing structure in line with similar Farmers Markets in the area, delegated authority given to the Market Superintendent,

Rates. A calculation of 50% of all these items has been budgeted for in year 2004/05. It should be noted that all Museum expenditure is now shown in the new format; i.e. non-statutory and not funded by the Precept and subsequently the Council Tax payer. There will be a saving on Rates which will be exempt when Swaffham Museum Ltd achieve Charitable status in 2004.

It is agreed that the detail of Museum accounts is streamlined to Grants and Museum Town Hall Expenditure.

4) ASSEMBLY ROOMS

The Assembly Rooms as you are aware is subject of a successful grant funding bid by the Icen Partnership and hopefully work will commence at some point in 2004, although no firm date has yet been agreed. There is a slight change to the planned project, as the Business suite has been removed. A sum of almost £700,000 is available for a refurbishment project, however there are discussions on-going to prepare a lottery bid to add to this sum. This will probably mean that the Community Centre project will be started first, thus making the facilities at the Assembly Rooms available whilst work is in progress at the Community Centre. The Icen Partnership regeneration project must be completed by December 2006 at the latest, so whilst we have the latest date for completion, at present it is difficult to predict the start date.

The past six months has seen both Management Groups come together for the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre, this is seen as the way forward as this new steering group will eventually produce a joint Management Group. The budget for the Assembly Rooms remains under the auspices of the Town Council. The budgeted income will match the budgeted expenditure right up to the point of closing the building for refurbishment.

It is agreed to recommend an increase for all hiring charges by 3%, this is subject to approval being granted by the Management Group, as delegated authority is with the Management Group to decide.

The other matter to consider for the future as work commences on site at both the Community Centre and the Assembly Rooms is that of a Service Level Agreement. This could provide income similar to an Agency Agreement to enable the Town Council to deliver a service, in the case of both buildings an agreement could be beneficial to the Council to provide a bookings service at the Town Hall as at present, plus cleaning and care-taking.

It is agreed that the Town Clerk carry out preliminary work with the Icen Partnership under Best Value principles. To prepare a report with full income and expenditure costings for consideration by the Finance Committee who would have delegated authority to decide if to proceed.

5) ALLOTMENTS

The allotments are still subject to the on-going Allotment Review and issues report presented to the Allotment Committee back in January 2003. The budget takes account of a limited amount of progress being made on some of the sites. The Allotment Committee have recommended a substantial rise in allotment rent as follows:-

It is agreed that allotments should be priced at £15 and £20 respectively from October 2004, plus the subsequent increase in water rates.

Whilst it is understood why these proposals have been put forward it is envisaged that this will bring to a head many more issues surrounding the viability of the allotment sites and accelerate the downturn in sites. It is therefore budgeted for a downturn in allotments of some 40% and the budgeted income has been adjusted accordingly.

It is agreed that an immediate indication is sought from allotment holders to ascertain the viability of all sites, followed by an updated issues report by the Town Clerk highlighting options available to the Council including land disposal of any surplus land.

6) CEMETERY

The Cemetery is an area where many improvements were made in the past year and many more are sought in the course of 2004/05. This is an on-going project where a little investment in officer time for research, preparation of grant bids and use of existing outside staff can deliver all the Council's requirements. The aim is to restore the Chapel, improve the driveway kerbs, replace planters, provide a workshop store in one of the garages, provide a composting area and with the aid of better machinery keep the grass at bay. There is also a need for a health and safety programme for checking gravestones, repairing gravestones and surrounds, levelling sunken graves etc.

It is agreed that a budget of £7,500 is established for the Restoration of the Chapel and £7,500 for Capital Improvements. That a project is developed, a bid for grant funding prepared and if necessary subject to Council agreement topped up from the match-funding budget when actual estimated cost is known.

7) OPEN SPACES & AMENITIES

The only income budgeted is from the Recreation Ground from the travelling Circus. There could be substantial income from grants if the Council agree to the Recreation Ground Committee preparing a grant funding bid or bids from appropriate sources, then by using some of the match funding budget when the project is fully researched and developed.

It is agreed that the Town Clerk prepare a draft terms of reference to allow the Recreation Ground Committee the delegated authority to prepare a project for the Recreation Ground. The Project would have to be approved in principle by the full Council prior to submitting bids for grant funding, at this point an amount of match funding would also need to be approved from the match funding budget.

The match funding budget appears as £64,000, this is the balance of Council's finances detailed in the Administration & Miscellaneous of a match-funding budget is that a number of projects can be developed that there are some funds already available to match at the local level and substantial funds from elsewhere. Some Capital Expenditure has been moved from into next years budget from the current year; the Icen Partnership Swimming Pool land, Magazine Restoration and Sports Fund.

It is agreed that a match funding budget first established in last years budget is now fully utilised to obtain grant funding for a variety of projects.

Budget headings for Street Furniture, Floral displays, Truck lease and Truck Maintenance appear for the first time, this helps to identify and monitor these costs.

Outside Equipment necessary this next year is required to be used mainly for the Cemetery, although there are occasions when equipment is used on other Council owned sites. A new small ride on mower is needed to replace a

similar machine that was purchased second hand three years ago, a replacement strimmer is also required. There are other smaller items to replace too!

It is agreed that the budget for outside equipment is approved with delegated authority given to the Town Clerk to arrange for a demonstration of new equipment, compare prices, negotiate a good deal for the Council and place an order at the earliest opportunity in preparation for the cutting season.

The Buttercross is arguably the most distinctive feature of Swaffham and this is now the responsibility of the Town Council. It is therefore necessary to start building a contingency fund for future repairs and maintenance. Similarly the Pedlars Sign needs to be looked after and a contingency for both is therefore deemed essential.

It is agreed that a budget of £2,500 is established for the current financial year and with the aim of adding similar sums in future years.

In September 2004 we will see the visit of both our twin towns to Swaffham. Approximately 30 visitors from Hemmoor and Couche Verac (60 in total) will be accommodated for this Civic visit being jointly organised with our Twinning Association. A contingency has been brought forward from the past two years and added to within this financial year. The aim is to return the hospitality to each of our twinned towns.

It is agreed that a budget of £5,000 is approved for the Twinning visit or 2004.

The budget for a Website has been increased slightly, this is because the current Swaffham website is no longer updated. It is therefore necessary to develop a Town Council website to help meet the criteria of a Quality Council in respect of communicating with the general public and access to information.

It is agreed to increase the budget to £600, research and develop a Town Council website in the financial year 2004/05. To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to programme this work as required.

The Tree Pollarding programme has been in progress for two years now and it is proposed to continue for the next two years. A lot of the major works have been carried out and it is envisaged that most of the expense will be out of the way after the next financial year. It should be possible to reduce this budget in 2006/07 to a more reasonable annual maintenance fee.

It is agreed to continue the tree pollarding policy for two years, then reduce to annual maintenance in 2006/07

8) ADMINISTRATION & MISC

The most significant change is recommended within this cost centre, it is that of the Council's policy on investments and loans. The previous Town Council set a policy to use the interest earned from an investment of £623,123, this is the capital sum from the sale of allotments in Brandon Road. The interest would cover a loan of £300,000 borrowed for the Town Hall Extension, a further £200,000 was borrowed for the purpose of supporting the Icen Partnership regeneration bid and to acquire land for a swimming pool site, these costs were £115,000 and £85,000 respectively. In total the £200,000 loan would be funded from an £18,000 saving on the Assembly Rooms from the point of leasing the building to the Icen Partnership, thus costing the Town

Council no more on the Precept than it was in September 2001, at the point of setting Council policy. The policy commits the Town Council for a period of 25 years.

The current Town Council have been in office since May 2003 and have been publicly criticised for a financial policy that was set by the previous Council. The Finance Committee has debated various options open to the Council, as none of the Capital is tied by a Trust or Covenant. It is therefore down to personal choice of whether the Council wish to continue with a policy for the remaining 23 years or if they wish to change to a policy that is manageable over a shorter period. The advantages of the current policy is that at the present time interest earned covers the loan repayments on the £300,000 and the repayments on the loan of £200,000 are more than covered by the £18,000 cost saving. The loan repayments will stay the same for the entire 25 year period, so the total outlay is known and with careful management the Council will be able to add to the Capital sum of £623,123 to have a substantial sum available in 25 years time. The disadvantages of this policy are that the Council are reliant on the investment rates remaining above 3.5%. In future years if interest rates remain low for a long period it would reduce the amount the Council could add to the Capital sum and thus reduce the £623,123 in real terms to significantly less than it's current value. Whilst there is every possibility that over a 25 year period things would even out, but it is still very much hit and miss, with no cast iron guarantees. The other matter to consider is that the public perception is that all the capital is tied up for 25 years for one project. The reality is that other projects have been made possible by structuring the finances in this way. It can be difficult to get this fact across to members of the public. There is also a significant hidden cost within the Council's accounts of extra administrative time caused by the calling of a Parish Poll, this is highlighted as one additional cost in the Accounts of £1,000, this figure could be multiplied by at least five.

The overriding factor to consider when looking at different ways of structuring the Councils finance policy is the current way local government is structured and the need to attract grants from other authorities and outside bodies. With any community based project, in most cases there is a need to work in partnership and to maximise this type of opportunity to gain additional income for Swaffham at the moment it presents itself, then there is a need to establish a budget within the Town Council accounts for match funding. This can be achieved by paying off both loans and using the balance as a match funding budget.

It is agreed in the year 2004/05 at the earliest opportunity that both outstanding loans are settled by using money currently invested from the sale of allotment land in Brandon Rd. The balance of this money, to form a match-funding budget invested for future capital expenditure projects.

There are also other changes in this cost centre, first of all a number of new budget headings for Agency Sundry, Councillor Training, Newsletter, Town Crier, Business in Bloom, Parish Poll, New Office Furnishings & Equip and Audit Fee. Most are straight forward and have simply been given a heading taking them out of a general heading.

Guidance notes will follow in respect of Members Allowances and Travel Expenses, this is a new regulation

that came into force on the 1st May this year. There is not a requirement to introduce a new scheme if no allowances are to be paid or claimed, but the Council should at the very least give consideration to a scheme in principle and an amount has been set aside within the budget to allow this to happen. A report and debate will take place below the line on 10th December.

There is a budget heading for Parish Poll this year, the reason being that the continuation of a well aired debate in the local press referring back to the Parish Poll called earlier this year, increases the possibility of a further Poll being called for whatever reason in the next financial year. It would therefore be sensible to have a contingency for this, even though it would be preferable to use the money on something constructive.

It is agreed that a budget of £750 is set aside as a contingency for a Parish Poll.

New Office Furnishings & Equipment will be required to service the new facilities within the Town Hall extension. It is difficult to predict every single item, but there will be some essential furniture, shelving and many other smaller items that will be necessary to function properly. These are items that would not be included in any capital project.

It is agreed that an initial budget of £2,500 is agreed to enable the new facilities to be adequately equipped. That delegated authority is given to the Town Clerk to use this budget wisely and report to the Finance Committee the details on a quarterly basis.

The Audit Fee in this current year will be much higher than normal due to queries taken up by local people with the external auditor that could have been answered at no cost to the Council Tax Payer by the Town Clerk. It is envisaged that the fee will double in this current year. In respect of future years the appointment of the internal auditor is an important one for the Council. The current internal auditor Brian Clements has taken on the task as a volunteer, this is very admirable but reliant on a lot of dedication and goodwill on his behalf. It is suggested to the Council that they should consider budgeting for the cost of an internal auditor to the value of £500 each year, contained under the heading of Auditors fees. This would allow the Council to offer payment for a good service to the current auditor within 2004/05 and thank him for his voluntary contribution in setting up the internal audit system this past year.

It is agreed that the audit budget for 2004/05 should be £1,300 to include £500 for the internal auditor.

9) THE PRECEPT

The Precept is the all important figure that the Town Council have to put forward in order to carry out most of the services that they deliver. Swaffham is lucky in as much as they have additional income from the Market in particular, also from other sources. This is highlighted in the new report showing how non-statutory items are funded in the town. The Council can and should debate all the recommendations put before them, it should be noted though that many compromises have already formed the basis of preparing the budget for 2004/05.

At this moment in time the new tax base for 2004/05 is not known, so the recommended increase of £6,300 (5%) would cost approximately an additional £2.50 at Band D (less than

5p per week). However, there is every likelihood that the tax base will be increased and this will reduce the increase to the Council Tax payer bringing the increase in real terms in line with inflation or slightly less.

The Finance Committee recommend that the Precept is raised from £125,000 to £130,000 for the year 2004/05.

BUDGET SUMMARY

The budget summary can be very misleading as presented, as it shows all monies contained within the accounts as income and monies owed in loans as expenditure. This on paper can look as if all income was received during the course of that year and all outstanding debts would be paid in the course of that year too! It is therefore worth remembering the capital amount on a two year bond is £623,123.23 and the outstanding loans are for £50,000 and £500,000 respectively.

NEW STYLE OF PRESENTATION – UNDERSTANDING THE BUDGET

The principle of this new style of presenting the budget to the Council was agreed at the October Finance meeting. This separates non-statutory (discretionary) expenditure from the statutory expenditure. In simple terms the level of non-statutory or discretionary expenditure will be determined mainly by the income generated by the Market, or by Agency and Service Level agreements. In the past it has not been easy to identify capital expenditure items separate from revenue expenditure, this problem has also been addressed this year. The main benefit of this type of presentation is that it should be easier to see what the Precept is actually paying for, as this relates to part of your Council Tax Bill and more importantly what the Precept clearly isn't paying for.

WHO ARE YOUR TOWN COUNCIL ??
 Your Councillors are listed below, the Town Council for the next four years are as follows:-

Mayor			
Ian Sherwood	01760	725076	
Deputy Mayor			
Pam Buxton	01760	724741	
Councillors:-			
Carol Baker	01760	723733	
David Butters	01760	722949	
Dave Cannon	01760	720900	
Paul Darby	01760	724479	
Ben Emmerson	01760	720982	
Anne Greaves	01760	725191	
Sheila Lister	01760	720114	
Frances Mann	01760	720403	
Shirley Matthews	01760	723205	
Jerome Stockdale	01760	724091	
Les Wise	01760	723825	

Your three Breckland Councillors as are follows: Paul Darby, Shirley Matthews and Ian Sherwood.

Your County Councillor is Shirley Matthews.

ASSEMBLY ROOMS or ALLOTMENTS

*All bookings or enquiries to the Town Hall Council Offices open daily
 Monday to Friday 9am – 1pm
 (except bank holidays).*

Iceni Partnership

Working Together To Make Life Better

• PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORY!

As you may know, in the Autumn the Iceni Partnership secured nearly £4 million as part of a successful bid for funds for economic regeneration in the Breckland district. This means we can now go ahead with plans to:

- Transform our historic Assembly Rooms
- Build a brand new Community Centre in Swaffham
- Make Swaffham town centre safer and more attractive for residents and visitors

This really is a momentous event and represents a terrific achievement for everyone involved. For a community organisation such as ours it is a real accomplishment to achieve such a large chunk of funding and demonstrates that partnership working really does achieve results!

And as if that were not enough...

• SKATEPARK PROJECT SUCCESS!

For those young people who may not have heard yet, in December we were successful in our bid to Sport England for funding towards a skatepark. This application was the last bid on which we were awaiting a decision – so we are overjoyed at the good news! This has been a real community project – led by the young people themselves, working through the Iceni Partnership. This project, which has been strongly supported all the way through by Swaffham Town Council, will provide a badly-needed facility for younger people in our town. Thanks must go to Iceni's Youth Focus group Chairman, Jane Atkins and to Sally Palmer for all their hard work and thanks also to Swaffham Lions for their on-going support.

And isn't it typical – you wait ages for one bid outcome and along come 3 at once...!

• MUSEUM FUNDING SUCCESS!

More good news for the town came with the announcement of a £25,000 award from funding body WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd of Bridgham, Norfolk) for Swaffham Museum. The award will act as 'match funding' for the Museum's regeneration project which is currently seeking funding through participation in a larger Norfolk-wide heritage bid. The project aims to make the museum more viable for the future, enlarge the current exhibition area and carry out improvements to existing displays.

- I hope you all had a happy and peaceful Christmas. I feel that 2003 ended on an optimistic note and I hope that, as a community, we can look ahead together to a positive New Year, a year in which we work together to support each other and our town.

If you would like further information on any of the above, please contact the Partnership's Development Officer, Bernie Rappensberger on 01760 722800 or email bernie@iceni.info

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BUS

With representatives from:

The Fire Service, The Police Service, Citizen Advice Bureau, Immigration, First Bus and The Pension Service.

The Bus will be at Swaffham Market Place on the 4th Monday of the Month 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Hang out, Information, Guidance and Youth Support Project.

Norfolk Youth and Community Service hold a "Drop In" session every Thursday Night 7.00pm till 9.30pm

at

Swaffham Community Centre.

For all young people aged 11 to 19 years old.

Friends of Swaffham Museum

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th March at the Community Centre, 7.30pm. Main business will be to elect a new committee, officers and representatives for the Board of Swaffham Museum Ltd. Nomination slips will be circulated with the Friends Newsletter in early March.

Anyone wishing to join the Friends of Swaffham Museum should get in touch with the Secretary, Barbara Clarke (01760 720140) or contact Philip Smith at the Museum (01760 721230).

The Museum re-opens in 2004 on Easter Saturday, but the season may not be as long as in previous years, due to the work on extending the Town Hall. However, the Museum needs volunteers to help with Steward duties and backroom work. There's always a lot to do, so if you would like to help, please get in touch with Philip Smith. You don't have to be an expert, and we are all volunteers. We need people with IT skills, a flair for design and writing, please don't be put off thinking its not you: it could be! Training is available and the work is fun and rewarding.

Breckland Home Watch

USEFUL INFORMATION

Norfolk Police 01953 424242 Crime Stoppers 0800 555111
Trading Standards 0800 328 6471 PACT 01953 424727

www.norfolkhomewatch.info

www.neighbourhoodwatch.net

www.crimereduction.gov.uk

www.norfolk-pa.gov.uk

www.norfolk.police.uk

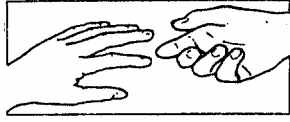
Swaffham Evening W.I. offers a warm welcome to new members and to visitors who would like to see how we run on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Church Rooms on the Campingland.

The programme for the next 3 months is:

January 7th: Ashill Handbell Ringers Competition – Prettiest Christmas Card.

February 4th: David Craske on supporting a Village School in Kenya Competition. African Wildlife Picture.

March 3rd – Trevor Banham on Flora & Fauna Competition. A Buttonhole.



SWAFFHAM & LITCHAM HOME HOSPICE SUPPORT

Registered Charity No: 1035414

The Home Hospice was set up in 1988 to support patients suffering from life threatening illnesses, and their families, from Swaffham, Litcham and the surrounding villages. We are a non-medical, volunteer organisation giving practical and emotional support in a variety of ways.

Our Service includes; home visits, day care, equipment loan, escorted hospital trips and a bereavement group.

For information regarding referral, fundraising or volunteering, please contact the Co-ordinator,

Debbie Harfield, on 01760 722937, e-mail: -homehospice@care4free.net,
or write to: -
25 Market Place, Swaffham, PE37 7LA.

Local Information Support Team

L.I.S.T. is for older people and people with a disability who are generally well but worried

THE LOCAL INFORMATION SUPPORT TEAM CAN GIVE YOU THE
ADVICE, HELP AND SUPPORT YOU NEED

Tel/Fax: 01553 774525

Email: lst.project.socs@norfolk.gov.uk

Bingo Bingo Bingo

Valentine Barker Court

Every Thursday 7.00pm for 7.30pm start Small Prizes
Pleasant atmosphere Tea and Biscuits 50p
All Welcome

ST RAPHAEL Club for the Disabled

Many thanks to everyone who helped at our Christmas Bazaar on November 15th. We raised nearly £700 which will go towards providing outings and activities for our members.

We urgently need helpers who are able to push wheelchairs when we have outings and meetings. If you are strong and are to spare a few minutes from time to time, please offer your services to those who find mobility difficult or impossible. Tel: 01760 720140. If you are under 65 and have difficulty, for any reason in getting about, think about joining the St Raphael Club, where we provide education, entertainment, friendship and fun for our members. We meet in the Assembly Rooms on the **First Tuesday in every month** except January from **7.00pm**. Just come along and see if you like us, or Tel. 01760 720140.

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

Drop in sessions will be held at Swaffham Town Hall every other Monday and will run from 10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

12th January, 26th January,
9th February, 23rd February,
8th March & 22nd March.

AGE CONCERN SWAFFHAM & DISTRICT

As a change from the usual entertainment afternoon we organised a coach outing to Holt to see the Christmas lights on December 16th. Demand to go exceeded supply so for similar events in the future we intend to provide additional seats as necessary. For January and for succeeding winter months we will be back to our usual **Third Tuesday in the month slot at the Methodist Church Rooms, starting at 2.30pm**. There are various events planned, e.g:

Tuesday 20th January, a "home grown" entertainment by our Age Concern volunteers, including a quiz. All older people welcome – you can decide for yourself what "older people" means!

Tuesday 17th February & Tuesday 16th March, we are currently arranging the entertainers. Please add these dates to your diary.

I am pleased to report that the Grand Art Exhibition held in the Methodist Church on the 28th & 29th November in aid of Age Concern was a big success with more paintings sold than last year and consequently a larger income for our group. It is through fund-raising efforts such as the Art Exhibition that we are able to provide free entertainment and other subsidised activities for older folk in the local area.

We have also been successful in attracting a £500 grant from Norfolk County Council to help set up a new befriending scheme, intended to benefit lonely people in the area through regular visits. However, for this to succeed we still need more volunteers so if anyone feel they can help to start this very worthwhile scheme PLEASE contact me as soon as possible (Tel 01760 720756). In the meantime we have pressed on with a much larger grant application to Age Concern centrally to help fund a paid part time Befriending Co-ordinator to run the scheme overall.

JAMES D DEAN (Chairman, Age Concern Swaffham & District)

The Pension Service

The Pension Service holds regular advice and information surgeries for over 60's on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Suffield Court, London Street, Swaffham from 1.00 pm – 3.30 pm. For an appointment please call 0845 6060265.

Swaffham & District Lions Club

*Carnival 2004 is being held in July this year with events leading up to Carnival Day which is **Sunday 11th July**. 60% of the proceeds will be going to the Air Ambulance and First Response.*

Campingland Patient Group

A.G.M. – Thursday 29th January 2004

at The Campingland Surgery

C.P.G. Meetings – Thursday 29th April,

Thursday 15th July & Thursday 28th October

At 7.15pm Telephone 01760 725920 For further details

Community Events

for January, February & March.

N.B. Unless stated all events in the Assembly Rooms

January

Friday 2nd 2.30pm – 4.30pm.
Friends & Neighbours, Meeting.

Saturday 3rd C D Sales.

Thursday 8th 7.00pm – 9.340pm
Horticultural Society Meeting.

Friday 9th 2.30pm – 4.30pm. Friends
& Neighbours, Meeting.

Saturday 10th 8.00am – 12 noon.
Pensioners Coffee Morning.
9.00am – 5.00pm Shoe Sale.

Wednesday 14th 6.45pm Town
Council Meeting.

Wednesday 14th Lions Quiz Night,
Conservative Club.

Friday 16th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 17th 9.00am – 4.00pm
Linen Sale.
9.30am – 12.30pm Lionesses Coffee
Morning.

Monday 19th 7.30pm – 9.30pm Icen
Meeting,

Tuesday 20th 2.00pm – 4.00pm
Pensioners Meeting.
7.00pm Town Council Recreation
Ground Committee Meeting.

Thursday 22nd 8.00pm Lions
Carnival Meeting, George Hotel.

Friday 23rd 2.30pm – 4.30pm.
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 24th 9.00am – 12 noon
Narborough Church Jumble Sale.

Tuesday 27th 7.00pm – 10.00pm
Ornithologists Meeting.

**Wednesday 28th 10.00am – 12
noon** Icen Meeting.
6.45pm Town Council Relief in Need
and Allotment Meeting.

Saturday 31st 9.00am – 12 noon
Save the Children Coffee Morning.

Friday 30th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours, Meeting.

7.00pm Horticultural Society Bingo.

February

Tuesday 3rd 7.00pm – 9.00pm St
Raphael Meeting.

Wednesday 4th 7.00pm Town
Council Management Group Meeting.

Friday 6th 2.30pm – 4.30pm Friends
& Neighbours Meeting.

Wednesday 11th 6.45pm Town
Council Meeting.

Thursday 12th 7.00pm – 9.30pm
Horticultural Society Meeting.

Friday 13th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 14th 8.30am – 4.00pm C
D Sales.
8.00am – 5.00pm Shoe Sale,

Saturday 14th Lions Coffee Morning,
Methodist Church Rooms.

Sunday 15th 9.30am – 2.00pm
Eastern Federation of Bird Fanciers.

Friday 20th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 21st 8.00am – 12noon
Pensioners Coffee Morning.
8.00am – 4.00pm Linen Sale.

Monday 23rd 10.00am – 12 noon
Access Group Meeting.

Tuesday 24th 12noon – 6.00pm
Lions Pancake Day.
7.00pm – 10.00pm Ornithologists
Meeting.

Friday 27th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.
6.00pm Conservative Ass. A.G.M.

Saturday 28th 9.30am – 12.30pm
Necton Scouts Jumble Sale.
7.00pm – 9.30pm Horticultural
Society Bingo.

March

Tuesday 2nd St Raphael Meeting,
Assembly Rooms.

Thursday 4th Horticultural Society
Meeting, Assembly Rooms.

Friday 5th 2.30pm – 4.30pm Friends
& Neighbours Meeting,

Saturday 6th 8.00am – 12 noon
Pensioners Coffee Morning.
7.30pm – 9.30pm Lions Bingo.

Wednesday 10th 6.45pm Town
Council Meeting.

Thursday 11th 11.00am – 8.30pm
Blood Donors.

Friday 12th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 13th 9.00am – 1.00pm
Save the Children Charity Fair.

Wednesday 17th Lions St Patrick's
Quiz, Conservative Club.

Friday 19th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 20th 8.30am – 4.00pm C
D Sales.
8.00am – 4.00pm Linen Sale.

Thursday 25th 8.00pm – Lions
Carnival Meeting, George Hotel.

Friday 26th 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Friends & Neighbours Meeting.

Saturday 27th 8.00am – 5.00pm
Shoe Sale.
7.00pm – 9.30pm Horticultural
Society Bingo.

Sunday 28th Lions, Safeway Trolley
Dash.

Monday 29th 7.30pm – 9.30pm
Swimming Pool Association A.G.M.

Tuesday 30th 7.00pm – 10.00pm
Ornithologists Meeting.

Swaffham Hospital League of Friends
Dates for your diary

Friday April 23rd – Cheese & Wine
at George Hotel – 7.00pm

Saturday 31st July – Hospital Fete
at 2.00pm

**N.B. Unless stated all events
are in the Assembly Rooms**